



Close Encounters of a Third-World Kind

This following teacher's guide was created by [Tracie Vaughn Zimmer](#), a reading specialist and author of *Reaching for Sun*. Visit her website to find dozens of guides to children's literature.

Close Encounters of a Third-World Kind

By Jennifer J. Stewart

About the book: Annie's father announces that she will miss two months of school but there is a small catch- they'll be in Nepal on a medical mission. No hot showers and a tent every night for a bed. And Annie will get stuck with her pesky five-year-old sister to watch a lot too. Will Annie find a way to make the most of her time in Nepal? With a new friend and a journey into the woods you never know what she might run into.

About the author: Jennifer J. Stewart has traveled extensively in Nepal, teaching health education classes to women and children. She has also trekked to Annapurna Base Camp and ridden a runaway elephant. Ms. Stewart makes her home in Arizona. This is her third novel.

Pre-reading:

What is the meaning of “third-world?” What are some examples of it? What are close encounters? What type of encounters do you think the main character will face?

Questions to consider:

- 1. Describe Annie and the other members of her family.**
- 2. Why are the Ferris' going to Nepal? Would you like to make this type of trip or not? Why?**
- 3. How is Nirmala's life different from Annie's?**
- 4. List some of the medical conditions that Annie sees at the clinic. What does it make you think about?**
- 5. Explain what happened when Nirmala took Chelsea and Annie to see the Rhododendron trees.**
- 6. Brainstorm a list of all the main events in the story and then number them by sequence.**
- 7. Everyone asks Mrs. Ferris if she has any sons. Why? How are boys treated differently than their sisters in Nepal? What do you think of this?**
- 8. How does Annie capture memories and scenes in the story? How do you?**
- 9. What is Nirmala's goal? Do you think she'll be able to reach it in Nepal? Why? How can the Ferris' help? What do they do? If you were Nirmala would you make the same choice?**
- 10. Predict how each of the characters in the story will change because of their journey to Nepal. How might you change?**

Across the Curriculum:

Language Arts:

Write at least three letters home from Nirmala to her family about what she is seeing in America. What would she think of school? Grocery stores? Women's fashion? Television?

Drama:

Role-play a scene that takes place after the close of the book. Write scripts, practice together and then act out your scene for the class.

History:

Research more about the country of Nepal. Learn about their musical customs, religious traditions, and arts and crafts. Create a poster or pamphlet to share with your classmates about what you learned.

Music:

Choose your favorite scene in the book. Now, pretend you are in charge of the music and sound effects for the movie version. What type of music will you choose? What sound effects will you need? How can you create them? For extra credit make a recording of the music and effects for your project. In a brief journal explain why you chose that particular scene.

Art:

Create a 3D map of the village and surrounding area using any materials that you like from around the house. Be creative.

-or-

Annie loves to sketch in her drawing pad, try keeping one of your own for at least a week. Keep it handy and whenever you get a chance sketch something in your surroundings.

Science:

Research one of the following topics mentioned in the story:

parasites in humans

deadly bee stings

antibiotic resistance to medicine

skin infections

abscess

cavities

scabies

malnutrition

Answer these questions: Describe the disease or disorder. What causes it? How can it be prevented? How is it made more difficult in places without much medical care?

Math:

Figure out these word problems (and then write three of your own inspired by the story!)

If Annie, Chelsea and Nirmala went ten miles up a mountain, back down the other side and four miles around it to get back to the village, then how many miles did they travel all together?

If the water buffalo eats 75 pounds of grass each day how much grass will he eat in a week?

If the suspended bridge can hold 100 pounds of weight and Annie weighs 72 pounds then how much had Chelsea better be less than so they don't fall through?

Service Project:

Brainstorm a project your class can do to raise money for a village like Nirmala's. Bake cupcakes, hold a garage sale, get sponsors for a reading marathon, etc. Then, donate the money raised to a worthy organization like [Helping Hands Health Education](#) or [Heifer International](#). (Heifer International has a great program called Read to Feed and they will send the packet to any group who wants to organize an event).

Critical Thinking:

Fill out this chart comparing Nirmala's life in Nepal to the one she'll have in America:

	Nepal	America
Family		
Home		
School		
Food		
Future		